

TO

THE BISHOP OF LANDAFF.

*On a Speech published in the Courier on the 11th of December last, purporting to be a Speech delivered by him on the 10th of that month, in which Speech is contained certain remarks relative to the subjects of BLASPHEMY, and that of PAINE'S AGE OF REASON.*

London, January 23rd, 1820.

MY LORD BISHOP,

I have read, in the newspapers, the report of a speech, which is, in those newspapers, stated to have been delivered by you. Upon such an occasion, we must take it for granted that the statement is true, and that the person to whom a speech is attributed, did actually deliver it. Nevertheless, it is right, upon all occasions, when we are commenting upon a Parliamentary speech, justice calls upon us to caution our readers against supposing that the *very words* of the speaker are given. This is next to impossible; notwithstanding the great talents of many of those gentlemen who take down debates, than who,

there are not, perhaps, a set of more clever men to be found in the world. But, we may generally rely upon what is given us as containing the fair meaning of a great part; if not, the substance of the whole, of what each speaker has said. With these preliminary remarks, I will insert what is given us as the speech of your Lordship, delivered at the time above mentioned, in the House of Lords. And, during the discussions on the new Bill "for the more effectual prevention and punishment of blasphemous and seditious libels."

This Bill, which is now become a law, has already been described by me, in another place; but I will repeat the description of it here. It is called an act for the more effectual prevention and punishment of blasphemous and seditious libels. When a man or a woman has been convicted upon a charge like this, the Judge may make an order for going and seizing all the copies of the publication, which shall remain in any place and which shall still belong to the person convicted. The order is to

authorize an entry by force into the house or building of such person, and to carry away the copies, which are to abide the further order of the court; and when the person convicted has received final judgment, the copies so seized are to be disposed of as the court shall order and direct! As to the new punishment, any one who has been convicted a second time for a second offence is now to be, if the court think proper, **BANISHED** *from the United Kingdom*, and all other parts of his Majesty's dominions, for such term of years as the court shall order! It ought to be added here, that this Bill must not, in justice to its authors, be viewed singly. It had five very worthy companion pieces, the last of which, takes away the time, which the law formerly gave an accused party to prepare for his defence. So that, as the law now stands, any writer, printer or publisher, engaged in a series of publications, may be *begun upon*, and, in the space of about *fifty days*, may be *banished for life*! I do not know enough of the technicality of the courts to name the precise number of days; but, ten days, more or less, is of little consequence in such a case. Suffice it to say, that such was, in substance, the Bill in support of which your

Lordship was speaking; and such the speed of the punishment to which it subjected all those engaged in literary pursuits.

The Bill speaks of Blasphemous and seditious publications; and it gives something professing to be a *definition* of what such libels must consist. They are thus defined, "any *blasphemous* or *seditious* libel, tending to bring into "hatred or contempt the person "of his Majesty, his heirs or successors, or the Regent, or the "Government and Constitution "the United Kingdom as by law "established, or either House of "Parliament, or to excite his "Majesty's subjects to attempt "the alteration of any matter in "Church or State, as by law established, otherwise than by "lawful means." This is the *definition*: the famous definition, which it took so much time to compose and agree upon. And, if words and points are, in this case, to have their usual meaning, the libel must not only be blasphemous, but it must tend to bring the persons and things after mentioned, into contempt or hatred, or it must tend to excite the King's subjects to attempt the alteration of matters in Church or State, by other than lawful means. And, in the case of seditious libel;



it must be seditious in the first place; and, after that it must have the tendency and contain the excitements, mentioned in the case of Blasphemous Libels. So much for the *defining* powers of lawyers. This is the grammatical meaning of the words; and, as the Act is penal, it ought to be construed strictly. However, it is probably intended to restrain the definition (if a definition it can be called) to the seditious libel; for, indeed, it appears to be a gross absurdity to impute to a *blasphemous* libel a tendency to bring any thing human into contempt or hatred; seeing that that would be to make the King, his Successors and the Parliament, *Gods*; which would, of itself, be blasphemy.

Your Lordship gave your support to the *whole* of the Bill; but you spoke only on the subject of Blasphemy. You said you would confine yourself to that part of the Bill which treated of Blasphemy. It is difficult, indeed, to see how you could possibly make the separation; but, I shall, at present, confine my remarks to what your speech contains, relative to *blasphemy* and to PAINE'S *Age of Reason*.

"The Bishop of LANDAFF said, "he should confine himself to

"that part of the Bill which  
 "treated of blasphemy; he  
 "thought there were strong rea-  
 "sons for making it *something*  
 "like a new offence if considered  
 "in an extended point of view.  
 "The offence of blasphemy and  
 "infidelity had been of long  
 "standing; it had been *gradually*  
 "*increasing during the last cen-*  
 "*tury*, and had of late assumed  
 "a different aspect. Formerly  
 "works of this description were  
 "written by persons of *liberal*  
 "*education, and addressed to those*  
 "*of the same attainments*: but  
 "latterly, *reason and argument*  
 "had been *abandoned*, and writ-  
 "ings of the most pernicious de-  
 "scription had been written in  
 "*a style suited to the lowest capa-*  
 "*city*. He repeated that argu-  
 "ment had been abandoned, and  
 "he would maintain, that there  
 "was *nothing of the kind to be*  
 "*found in 'Paine's Age of Reason.'*  
 "When writings such as that were  
 "placed in the hands of the *vul-*  
 "*gar*, there was little chance of  
 "persuading them of its fallacy  
 "*by arguments they were not equal*  
 "*to comprehend*. The Noble Earl  
 "who had preceded him had re-  
 "marked, that they (the Bishops)  
 "had special duties to perform;  
 "*they had undertaken the task*,  
 "and he hoped their Lordships

“ would support them in their en-  
 “ deavours, and thereby inspire  
 “ the virtuous part of society with  
 “ confidence, and convince them  
 “ that they felt as they ought up-  
 “ on the subject. Since the blas-  
 “ phemy of the present day had  
 “ arrived at so glaring a height,  
 “ he thought it should be marked  
 “ with an ignominious punish-  
 “ ment, and it was time that the  
 “ offenders should be intimidated  
 “ with the terrors of the law.”

I wish your Lordship had at-  
 tempted to define blasphemy.—  
 And I see no reason for your not  
 doing it; and, especially for the  
 Bill not doing it; seeing that it  
 admits of a very satisfactory defi-  
 nition.

*Blasphemy* does not mean any  
 of those things of which even Mr.  
 PAINE has been guilty. To blas-  
 pheme is to speak in terms of im-  
 pious irreverence of God. Blas-  
 phemous is impiously irreverend  
 with regard to God. A blas-  
 phemer is a wretch that speaks of  
 God in impious and irreverend  
 terms. And, BLASPHEMY is  
*an offering of some indignity unto*  
*God himself.* Now, my Lord, here  
 is something like definition; and  
 that these definitions are all cor-  
 rect I defy any man upon earth to  
 disprove.

Therefore, until a man has been  
 guilty of offering some indignity

to God himself he cannot justly  
 be charged with being guilty of  
 blasphemy. I was surprised to  
 hear your Lordship say that there  
 was no argument to be found in  
 PAINE'S *Age of Reason*. I had  
 never read the book. But I had  
 read his other writings with great  
 care. In them I found the best of  
 arguments and an abundance of  
 them in support of every proposi-  
 tion that he undertook to maintain.  
 There I saw him developing with  
 clearness unparalleled matter,  
 of a nature the most interesting,  
 and in their combinations the most  
 complicated. If I looked to the  
 effect, too, I saw him first pointing  
 the way and then leading a nation  
 through perils and difficulties of  
 all sorts, to independence and to  
 lasting liberty, prosperity and  
 greatness. In matters of specula-  
 tion as to that country as well as  
 to this, I saw evidences of the most  
 profound penetration; and I saw  
 his predictions fulfilled with a  
 precision which would almost en-  
 title them to the appellation of  
 prophecies.

I was therefore surprized to  
 hear your Lordship say that you  
 found *nothing like argument* in any  
 work of his; and thereupon I re-  
 solved to read the book. So that  
 your Lordship has been the cause  
 of adding one to the number of



the readers of that performance. It is not necessary for me to say what my opinion of the book is, generally, except that it has had not the smallest effect upon *my* creed; and that I believe just the same as I believed before I read it; and besides this, that, as to his own creed, it appears to me to be just as inconsistent and ridiculous as that of the Unitarians, and not a bit more so. They believe; and so does he; and their belief, though they differ as to minor parts are essentially the same; notwithstanding what Bishop Belsham or Mr. William Smith (who appears to be a sort of Head of the Church of Unitarianism) may say to the contrary. And this I am ready to maintain against them whenever they choose to enter the field.

But, though Mr. Paine is no Christian, he is no *blasphemer*; he offers no *indignity unto God himself*. He, in no part of his book, speaks in terms of impious irreverence of God; but, on the contrary, not only professes his belief in a God, and in a future state of rewards and punishments, but he praises God and calls upon his readers to reverence his name, and this, too, in a strain of eloquence, the equal of which I never happened to meet with in any ser-

mon or homily, or any other composition written by layman or clergyman. I have read TILLOTSON and SHERLOCK and BARROW and BOSSUET and FENELON. But I never have met with, in any one of them, passages in praise of a superior being so eloquent, so persuasive and so likely to produce conviction as those having the same object in view contained in this so much mis-represented, so much abused, so much reviled, Age of Reason.

Indeed, the author sets out, which I never knew before, with stating that one of his objects was, *to prevent the French people from becoming Atheists*; so that, here is no blasphemous intention, at any rate. The author sets out with professing that his object is to maintain the notion of the being of a God, of whose name, from first to last, he speaks with reverence and awe. I can assert, too, upon the authority of living witnesses of perfect credibility, that PAINE never indulged himself in swearing; and that if any one swore in his presence, he seldom failed to reprove the act with great severity. To call such a man a *blasphemer* is, therefore, to do him great injustice.

To be an unbeliever in the Christian System, is not to be a

blasphemer ; for, if this were the case, we have whole tribes of Jews, who are open blasphemers, and who are tolerated in holding Tabernacles wherein they promulgate blasphemy. To disbelieve in the Christian System, we deem to be grossly erroneous ; but there is a large part of the world who never yet heard of it ; they, of course, cannot believe in it ; and yet, must we call them blasphemers ? And are the inhabitants of Asia, Africa and three fourths of America to be deemed blasphemers ?

No ; the blasphemer is he who *impiously rails against God himself*. But even the Atheist cannot be a blasphemer ; for, the Atheist does not believe that there is a God. He laughs at the idea of there being a God at all. He looks upon every thing that exists, as *having come of itself*. He thinks, or says he thinks, that every thing has been self created, as maggots are engendered in putrid substances, vegetable as well as animal. He thinks that matter is imperishable ; that it only changes one form for another ; and that, there is nothing new under the sun. He tells you that a "*first cause*," as POPE calls it, is a contradiction within itself ; for that, there must have been a cause of that "*first cause*."

This, or something like it (for I never have pestered myself with studying any such subjects) is the Creed of the Atheist ; be it what it may, in other respects, it is not blasphemy ; because, blasphemy is an indignity offered unto God himself ; and the Atheist cannot offer such indignity ; because he does not believe in the existence of a God : and this is a conclusion, so clearly and fairly resulting from the premises, that I deem it impossible for any man to find an argument wherewith successfully to oppose it.

It follows, then, I think, that for a man to be a blasphemer, he must first acknowledge that he believes in the existence of a God ; and next, he must be guilty of offering an indignity to this God. To deny the truth of the Christian System ; to say that it is false ; to endeavour to convince others of its falsehood ; to treat it with contempt and ridicule ; to use, in short, every endeavour in our power to degrade it and to cause it to be utterly exploded : what is all this, but what the Jews do, every day of their lives ? And, again I observe that, nobody ever attempts to punish the Jews as blasphemers.

Neither are the Unitarians deemed blasphemers. Yet they



come a little nearer to the mark than any of these unbelievers of which I have above spoken. It is curious enough, too, that in 1815, it was deemed blasphemy to *impugn the doctrine of the Trinity*. An act was then passed to make it not Criminal for persons to do this. Now, my Lord, what is it to impugn the doctrine of the Trinity? It is to deny, openly to deny, and to promulgate the denial, *that Jesus Christ is God*. If a man denied this, before the passing of the act to which I allude, he was liable to be punished for it, as a blasphemer. There was reasonableness in this, provided a man professed a belief in the Christian System; because, according to that System, Jesus Christ is God; and, therefore, to assert that he is not God, is to offer an indignity unto God himself; and this is blasphemy. But, if a man, professing the Christian faith, be allowed to degrade Jesus Christ, by denying his Divinity, I should be very glad to know how it is possible to find out any thing proper to be punished as blasphemy.

There is, in the City of London, a set, who call themselves, "Free thinking Christians," at the head of whom is the keeper of a gin shop. These people go one step further, I am told, than the

Unitarians. They talk of Jesus Christ as of *a very good sort of man*; or something in that way, and, in short, by their familiar gabble about Christianity; and by their adopting this part and rejecting that part of the Scriptures, throw as much ridicule upon the whole thing as they have the capacity to throw upon it. Yet these men are permitted to hold their sittings publicly; while Mr. CARLILE is solacing himself within the walls of the Jail of Dorchester; though he, not professing to be a Christian, could not, it appears to me, be guilty of blasphemy.

It is very true, indeed, that Mr. CARLILE's publications were likely to produce a much greater effect than the preachings hatched in the gin shop. But, my Lord, (and I now come to a very interesting part of the discussion), is this the best way of checking the progress of Mr. CARLILE's, or, rather, Mr. PAINE's principles? Was it ever yet known that man was cured of an error by punishment of any sort? Your Lordship says that blasphemy has gone on *gradually increasing* during the last hundred years; but that, of late, it has increased much faster than in the former part of the period. If your Lordship will look into the Records of Courts of Justice, you will find that *disbelief* (for I do not call it blasphemy) has increased exactly in pro-

portion as the punishment of it has increased. And this must always be the case, as to matters of opinion. Punish a man for any matter of opinion and you gather round him a crowd of converts. They think his opinion right, because, and *solely because*, it has been answered by a punishment of his body, or a confiscation of his goods. If we see two men engaged in an argument upon a point with regard to which our own minds have not come to a decision; and if we see one of the parties quit the argument, and knock the other down; we, that instant, conclude that the bruiser was endeavouring to maintain a falsehood or an error. This is universally; it is, without a single exception, the practice of mankind. The mere history of the proceedings of the Inquisition in Spain; the mere reading of the accounts of its proceedings, has, perhaps, done more to injure, not only the Roman Catholic Religion, but the Christian Religion generally, than the united efforts of VOLTAIRE and of PAINE, compared with whom, all the rest of the Anti-Christian writers sink, in point of effect, wholly out of sight.

Your Lordship says, that the *vulgar* are incapable of comprehending the arguments, necessary to remove impressions made by writings like those of PAINE.

You had before said, that blasphemous writings were formerly put forth by none but men of *liberal education*, and were read by none but persons of similar attainments. You thus put HUME, GIBBON, and the rest of that tribe, above Mr. PAINE, in point of learning. Compared with Mr. PAINE, as to powers of mind; as to the capacity of producing conviction upon any subject, HUME and GIBBON were nothing. At any rate, they were less than a child in its primer, is, compared with his schoolmaster. But, surely, VOLTAIRE wrote so as to be clearly understood by the unlearned as well as by the learned; and he wrote a long while ago. However, is blasphemy less odious because its author has been at an university? Is it less criminal on that account; and ought the works of HUME and GIBBON to be sold with impunity, while such dreadful punishment is visited on the heads of those who sell the works of Mr. PAINE? While these things take place, it will be impossible for people not to believe that such severities proceed from something, other than a pure and unmixed love of religion.

It is notorious that the works of HUME and GIBBON are to be found in every considerable bookseller's shop, and in every library, private as well as public, in this Kingdom and in the United States



of America. Of course, they are read by the youth of all that part of the people in both countries, who, in point of property, are above the mere labouring classes. Is there no danger, then, in these books, particularly as they have come from men of "*liberal education*"? They contain argument, too, it seems; and who is there at hand, to counteract the effect of this argument? Is there no danger in the adoption of principles hostile to Christianity, by all the youth except those of the labouring classes; and, is it amongst the labourers alone, that the adoption of such principles is to become injurious? Is it the souls of the labourers alone that it is necessary to defend against these dreadful temptations?

But your Lordship said that there was nothing like argument in PAINE's Age of Reason. I find it to be all argument. But, if there be no argument in it, how can it be very dangerous? To assert to people's teeth that what they have all along been believing is false. Merely to *assert* this, is not the way to make converts. The writer who confines himself to mere assertion, is never to be dreaded, except by the friends of the cause that he espouses; and especially when he writes upon Religion. To make a direct attack upon men's faith, merely by assertion, is to tell them that they

are *fools*; and this is an affront that men never fail to resent, by disregarding the man who offers it; no man ever knew better than Mr. PAINE how to avoid the commission of errors of this sort. He approaches his reader with softness and persuasion; and, if he makes not a convert to his doctrine, he is sure to gain a friend, by his gentleness, his tolerance and his benevolence.

But your Lordship declines entering into argument, not because Mr. PAINE has, as you say, made use of no argument; but because the *vulgar* are incapable of comprehending the arguments necessary to counteract the writings of Mr. PAINE. Now, my Lord, it appears to me that if Mr. PAINE's be nothing but mere assertions, it would be extremely easy to show that to the mind of the most vulgar part of the creation, meaning, by the word vulgar, *ignorant*, as to matters expressed upon paper. If there be no argument in Mr. PAINE's book; how easy would it be to show that it consists of mere assertions; and, if those assertions be false, how easy would it be to show, and to make even the most ignorant clearly see, the fact of their falsehood? To suppose the people to be too ignorant to be able to comprehend a plain statement, denying an assertion, is to suppose them to be but a very little above the

brutes that perish. And, if they be so very ignorant as this, what harm can Mr. PAINE's book possibly do? For, if a man cannot understand my words, when I contradict the assertion of another man, how is the poor creature to understand that other man's assertion?

Never was there a time when such efforts had been made to send forth writings on the side of Christianity. Perhaps, there has been more done in this way, within the last twenty years, than within the previous five hundred years. If the harvest be not abundant, it is not, at any rate, for the want of labourers or for the want of constant employment of those labourers. Not only have immense sums, over and above the usual rewards of the Church, been taken out of the public treasury and employed for this purpose; but every scheme has been resorted to, to get money out of the pockets of the people in the way of donation, subscription and contribution, from the hundreds of pounds of the Nobles down to the very pennies of the maid servants; and all, for the purpose of carrying on the work of circulating books from the bulk of the Bible down to single half sheets, under the title of Religious Tracts, sold for a halfpenny. In such a state of things, can it be difficult to counteract the tendency

of Mr. PAINE's writings without resorting to dreadful fine and imprisonment, and without adding thereunto the punishment of banishment? Are the people so very perverse and obdurate as to be blind and deaf to what five million of publications say on one side, in answer to one single publication on the other side? And, that, too, your Lordship will observe, when these five millions of publications have to combat nothing but bare assertion (as your Lordship says) wholly unsupported by argument. Let it be observed, too, that the mass of the people must necessarily be impartial, in this case; or if they have any feelings of partiality, those feelings cannot possibly be in favour of Mr. PAINE. They never knew him personally. He never was able to purchase the favour of any one man amongst them. He is dead; and can do them neither harm nor good. Every prejudice has been appealed to, roused up and arrayed against him. The active men of the present day; the fathers of families of this our day, were brought up in their youth to detest and despise his name. The boys and girls of twenty years ago were led on by the clergy and other persons in authority to burn him in effigy a ceremony which was omitted in scarcely any one village in this whole kingdom. To burn a Tom

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**PAINE** was much more popular than to burn a **GUY FAWKES**; whose place **PAINE** supplied for several years on the annual festival of riotous loyalty.

It is impossible for writings to have gone forth under greater disadvantages than those of Mr. **PAINE**; while those which were opposed to him, came forth with every advantage that can be imagined. These latter were so cheap as almost to be given away; they were encouraged by the Government, backed in every part of the Kingdom by the local authorities, Civil, Military, Religious and Fiscal. To every four labourers, take the Kingdom through, there has been at least one person having an interest direct or indirect to oppose Mr. **PAINE**'s work. Every individual labourer or artisan has had some such person actually to speak to him and to plead with him upon the subject. Add to this, the powers of the Pulpit, established as well as unestablished. And, after all this, do we, my Lord, come to this conclusion, that it is necessary to make it a crime, meriting even banishment, to put forth this book of Mr. **PAINE**, which book is (as your Lordship says), wholly destitute of argument!

However, I am of opinion that your Lordship is very much deceived in supposing the People, or the vulgar, as you were pleased

to call them, to be *incapable of comprehending argument*. The argument necessary to upset a book which contains no argument and nothing like argument, need not, certainly, be very profound. But, if it were profound, I believe that the labouring classes of this Kingdom at this day, are fully adequate to the comprehending of it. The people do not, I assure your Lordship, at all relish little simple tales. Neither do they delight in declamatory language, or in loose assertion; their minds have, within the last ten years, undergone a very great revolution. During that time, I have addressed nothing to them which did not rely, for success, upon *fact*, and upon the best arguments which I was able to produce. My subjects have been generally of the most intricate nature. They have been of that kind which have universally been considered the most dry and unentertaining. I have made use of no means to attract curiosity or to humour the fancy. All has been an appeal to the understanding, the discernment and the justice of the reader. Yet, it will be pretended by few persons that there ever has been a work so cherished by the great mass of the people, as mine has been, from the day that I entered a prison, in 1810, down to the present hour. Indeed, what greater proof of this is wanted, than the passing of

that Act of Parliament which put an end to the sale of cheap political publications.

Your Lordship spent your early days in schools and colleges; your prime of life, most likely, amongst Clergymen and persons of considerable wealth; and the station you now fill necessarily implies that you pass your time in great mansions and palaces. It is not, therefore, at all surprising that you should know very little of the mental state of the labouring classes. Give me leave, therefore, to say that you are greatly deceived in this respect; for that these classes are, to my certain knowledge, at this time, more enlightened than the other classes of the community; that is to say, as far as relates to the nature and tendency of public measures of every description. They understand the nature and tendency of all laws affecting their rights; they fully comprehend every argument addressed to them upon the subject of those laws; upon the subject of taxation, of public debts; and they now clearly understand all the causes and all the effects relating to those most intricate things, Banking, and Paper-Money; with regard to which they were, only ten years ago, in darkness as complete as that which is so eloquently described by MILTON. There is scarcely a man amongst them who cannot

tell you, in the clearest manner, how the meal of the labourer in Scotland is diminished or augmented by the operations of the Bank Directors, sitting in London. For about six weeks before I left America, I was visited by great numbers of persons who wished to see me, merely for the sake of seeing me. Upon one occasion six Scotsmen, all weavers, came for this purpose, sending forward one of their company with their joint request and with an apology for making it. I was pleased with the whole of their demeanour. They sat with me the better part of an hour. We conversed on the several subjects which were interesting with regard to our native country. Our conversation embraced the past and the future, as well as the present; and I declare to your Lordship, that, in my whole life (though it has happened to me to sit at the same table with six Privy Councillors, at once), I never was in the company of six persons at one time, in whom I could discover marks of understanding so extensive, of notions so correct, judgment so sound, language, in all respects, so proper and suitable, and, withal, love of country so strong and manifestly so sincere, as I discovered in these six excellent Scotsmen; from whom I parted with peculiar regret.

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there are multitudes of men of this description; and the whole mass is really and truly enlightened. No Act of Parliament can pass, the drift and intention of which they do not understand, as well as they know their right hand from their left. They see farther into the future than the Parliament and the Ministers.— There is this advantage attending their pursuit of knowledge.— They have no particular interest to answer; and, therefore, their judgment is unclouded by prejudice and selfishness. Besides which, their communication with each other is perfectly free. The thoughts of one man produce other thoughts in another man. No- tions are canvassed without the restraint imposed upon suspicion, by false pride, or false delicacy. And hence the truth is speedily arrived at. A writer engaged in the instruction of such a people, is constantly upheld, not only by the applause that he receives from them, and by perceiving that his labours are attended with effect; but also, by the aid which he is continually deriving from those new thoughts which his thoughts produce in their minds. It is the flint and the steel meeting that brings forth the fire. And, for my own part, I always say that I have derived from the people, in return, ten times the light that I have communicated to them.

Be the process, however, what it may, the thing is *done*; the people of these kingdoms are enlightened. They have a capacity for comprehending every argument, upon every subject connected with politics and religion; and, therefore, it appears to me, that amongst “those *peculiar duties*” which your Lordship says the Bishops have undertaken to perform, ought to be included, great endeavours by argument, to put a stop, if it be necessary to put a stop, to the increase which your Lordship says is taking place in blasphemy. I can assure your Lordship that no good arguments will be thrown away; and I can also assure you that *nothing but argument* will produce, even in the smallest degree, that effect which you seem so desirous to see produced.

Your Lordship says that the Bishops “*have undertaken the task.*” *What* task is not said; but peculiar duties are talked of. Now, amongst the duties of a Bishop, who is an *Overseer*, is that of seeing that the Clergy under him, *perform their duty*. How many of the parochial Clergy reside amongst those, *the care of whose souls* they have with the most solemn vows and promises taken upon them: how many of the Clergy thus reside, I cannot exactly say, but this I know well; that, in 1800 great numbers of

them were informed against, under an act of Parliament which made it penal not to reside; I know that the actions brought by the informer were in Court; I know that BLACKSTONE tells us that even the King himself cannot pardon such an offence; I know that those actions were suspended for one year by one act of Parliament; that they were further suspended, by another act of Parliament; and that they were totally quashed by another act of Parliament! I need say nothing in the way of comment upon this transaction. It speaks for itself with trumpet tongue.

But what do we see? What do we behold as to the state of religion in this kingdom, at this moment? We have a national Church established by law, receiving an immense revenue. We have innumerable sects, daily and hourly increasing; and one sect, only one of the number, challenging the Church as to populaceness of congregation. This sect has divided the whole kingdom into districts; those districts into minor local divisions; these divisions subjected to the controul of one or more superintendent; these superintendents have their subaltern leaders; these leaders raise regular assessments; these assessments are formed into a fund; this fund is subject to the absolute controul of a convocation, consisting exclusively of the preach-

ers, who, of course, distribute the proceeds amongst themselves; this Convocation issues out its ordinances or mandates: and thus there exists a second spiritual dominion, more complete, as to its organization, and beyond measure, more powerful as to its influence than the first. And, what is truly curious to observe, these two, as far as relates to politics, pull most cordially in the same direction. The Parliament, including the Bishops, and most heartily backed by the Clergy, who have been the most active amongst the Magistrates, have been passing laws to suppress cheap publications, to prevent public meetings; to restrain the pen and the tongue; and the Methodists, from their Conferences, have been issuing *fulminations* with the same tendency, and having the same object in view.

What can have produced this strange, this seemingly unnatural union of action? Is it an unity in love for religion? The cheap publications, and the public meetings, call for a Reform in the Commons House of Parliament. They call for a change that would inevitably put an end to a great deal, an enormous mass, of drunkenness, debauchery, profligacy, corruption, bribery, and perjury. Can it be from an united love of religion that the Methodists and the Church co-operate in hostility



against the cheap publications and the Public Meetings? The Church, indeed, may dread any change having in it the seeds of possible overthrow of the establishment. But what can the Convocation of the Methodists dread? What can they see dangerous in a Reform of the House of Commons? Why, my Lord, I tell you what they dread: they dread the loss of that luxurious living which they derive from the *weekly pennies*, drawn from the pockets of the labouring classes; collected together so regularly; and managed with such profound skill and perseverance. The Methodist preachers know, from experience, that it is a great deal better for them to live upon the fruit of the labour of others, than to live upon the fruit of their own labour. I am not so uncharitable as to suppose that there are not some, and even a great many, belonging to this numerous body of preachers, who are perfectly sincere in their professions, and disinterested in their views. But, if I am to judge from their conduct, a very great proportion of them have no other object in view than that of living without labour, at the expence of those who do labour.

There is something unfortunate, to say the least of it, in this perfect union of action between the Church and the Methodist Convo-

cation. Religion is not an abstract idea. It is not something metaphysical. It is to produce effect upon men's conduct, or it is good for nothing. It is to have an effect upon the actions of men. It is to have a good influence in the affairs and on the condition of men. Now, if the Church religion be well calculated for this purpose, of what use is the Methodist religion; and, if the Church religion be not calculated for this purpose, how is it that we see the Methodist Convocation so cordially uniting with the Church in endeavouring to produce an effect, as to the affairs and condition of the nation? I should like to hear the answer that [some Methodist Bishop, (or Head Man) would give to this question. If it be useless to attempt to answer PAINE's Age of Reason, an answer to this question could not be quite useless; and, though I never meddle with religion, except when religion meddles with politics, I can assure their reverences of the CONFERENCE, that they had better answer this question the first moment that they have to spare; and, until they have answered it, they will do well to desist from issuing *fulminations* against the Reformers, and to cease calling upon their congregations (as one of them lately did, at Manchester) *to take up arms* against men who have committed violence upon no-

body; who have no where broken the peace; whom no degree of suffering has been able to urge on to pillage or riot; and who seek to better their condition by humbly Petitioning for a measure which they think would diminish the weight of taxation and promote the cause of morality, by putting an end to a great mass of drunkenness, bribery and perjury. If the Conference say; "what care we for these: what care we for your sufferings: what care we for your want of employment and the weight of your taxes; so long as we have your weekly pennies, and the interest of our money in the funds, the value of which is augmented in proportion as prices are low and employment scarce:" if this be their answer, then the *Class* and *Class-leaders* will know at once what to do; and, if they answer not, the people will soon know what to infer from their silence.

In the meanwhile, however, the people have it in their power to put a stop to *this species of taxation*. The Church, my Lord, if it meddled not with politics in any shape whatever, is by no means oppressive to the labouring classes. The tythes are paid by the land: and it is of no consequence to the labourer, whether the land-owner wear a Mitre or a Coronet, a black coat or a blue coat. The land furnishes a Church, a church-yard,

and a Priest, for every parish; and it comes not to the labouring man for any contribution. It has this amiable feature in it, that it puts, in this respect, the poor man upon a level with the rich. And, rightly viewed, a Church, maintained as ours is, generally speaking, presents a *privilege* to the labourer, rather than an *oppression*. But, if the Methodist Conference be to come to him for a tax, of what use is the Church to him? He must be convinced before he pay this tax, that the Church is of no use at all; and yet he sees at this time an union of operation between the Conference and the Church. If this be the case, why is he to contribute to the support of the Conference; if both have the same influence in the affairs and on the condition of men; and if one demand money from him, and the other none; that surely is the best, which does not demand the money.

But the Conference will tell its people, that, though it agrees with the Church in politics; it does not agree with the Church in matters of religion. The Conference *must* say this; or else why have a Methodist Religion at all; and then the weekly pennies begin to tremble, and the mass in the Funds begins to shrink. It is something pretty strange that the Conference should think it necessary to tax the people for the good



of their souls, and to represent the Church as quite inadequate, in that way, while this same Conference so cordially co-operates with the Church in all those acts and deeds which are really to have an influence on the condition and also on the morals of the people. The Conference, however, pretends that it dissents from the Church from purely religious motives. Now, there is one way of bringing this Conference to the test; and that is the simplest and easiest of all ways in the world; namely, by *withholding the weekly pennies!* There are, doubtless, many very sincere men amongst the Methodist preachers, and these men will, in a twinkling, be discovered by this test. They will *preach without pay, as the Apostles did*; and as the Quakers now do. They will do as SAINT PAUL told the preachers of the Gospel to do; that is, *preach without pay; and work with their own hands the things that be good, in order to have to give to him who needeth.* They recollect a great many passages of Scripture, and, let us hope, that in this time of general misery, they will not forget this. The weekly pennies take from each family, at the very least, four shillings and two-pence a year; and from families where there are several young persons partly grown up, five or six times the sum; so that, upon an average,

the Conference takes one week's provisions from a family in a year. This affords a nice little smuggling from a priesthood that is doing all that lies in its power to prevent the whole of the people of this kingdom from enjoying freedom and happiness.

However, this cannot last long, in the present enlightened state of the public. A man who has been making shoes all the week will not preach the worse for that on the Sunday. A black coat, and a white band, do not put knowledge into the head, or virtue into the heart; nor do they give eloquence to the tongue. There are thousands upon thousands of labourers and artizans and manufacturers, who never yet attempted to preach, and who are better able to do it than the members of the Conference, who for the far greater part, have been labourers and artizans, and who have become *preachers*, because it was pleasanter to *preach* than to *work*. At any rate, in this time of dreadful misery, I earnestly hope that the taxing system of the Methodists will very soon give way before the good sense, the spirit, and the justice of the people. In every place where there is a Methodist Chapel, let the people go, if they like; but let them pay nothing. *No more pennies.* If the preacher be really inspired, I will warrant that he

will speak without being paid. With very little grace, do the methodist preachers cry out against a *hireling* priesthood. The Quakers have some reason on their side, when they put forth this cry, but the Methodists are really and truly *hirelings*, while at the same time, they exercise all the powers of masters. They collect the money; they put it in the funds; they are a great company of fundholders: they will suffer no inquiry as to how they divide the money: they even expel members, if they dare to make any such inquiry. In short, the Jesuits in Peru never exercised a more arbitrary authority.

It is impossible for any rational being to believe, if he take time to reflect, that it can be the wish, will, and pleasure of God Almighty, that any part of his creatures should live in a state of suffering such as the people of this country now endure. It would, indeed, be to be a blasphemer, to hold such an abominable doctrine. Can it then be the pleasure of God that these methodist preachers should live in ease and luxury upon the pennies extracted from the pitiful earnings of their starving congregations? Can it be the pleasure of God that those who profess to be teachers of his word, should thus flagrantly disobey some of the most strongly enjoined precepts contained in that

word? It is impious in the last degree to suppose that God does not wish the happiness of all his creatures. This wish of God is written in the mind of man, which always teaches him to pursue what he thinks will tend to his happiness. Can a man be happy without the enjoyment of his rights; without a sufficiency of food and of raiment; and can those men be the followers of Jesus Christ, who tell the suffering many to be content in the last degree of misery, which indeed these teachers aid in producing by the exactions which furnish them with the means of living in luxury. They tell us that this is a state of trial; a vale of tears; and so on. But they themselves take care to shed but few tears. The word of God nowhere tells us that this is to be a state of *slavery* and a vale of *starvation*; but, on the contrary, it is full of humane precepts; it is full of passages which tell us that all the products of the earth have been made for our use and enjoyment. It is very true, that, in the parable, the *rich* man is in misery after this life, while the *beggar* is in Abraham's bosom. But, we are not to conclude from this, that we must be beggars, and live by licking up crumbs, *in order to be saved*. If this were the case, the Methodist Conference would be in a very poor way; for, perhaps, there is not a body of men in the whole



kingdom that lead more easy, more comfortable, and even more luxurious lives. If I were a Methodist, I would take care of my pennies: I would give them in the shape of food and raiment, to my own wife and children: I would interpret my Bible myself, or go to hear a man that did not want to be paid: and I think that I should not, on this account, merit the fate of the rich man in the parable.

The Methodists, in the several parts of the kingdom, have paid for the building Chapels; but these become, at once, *the property of the Conference*. So that, they have real property, as well as funded property; and they levy taxes. They suffer no one but themselves to have any thing to do with this property, which, besides the *Chapels*, consists of *dwelling-houses* for the Preachers. And thus they hold the Congregations by quite another tie than that of principle. The *Buildings are theirs*; and they will suffer nobody to preach in the Chapels, who is not *chosen by themselves*. No wonder that such a body should pay its court to those who have the *power of making laws*! And this it has always done from its very first beginning. The people who are Methodists in principle, have but one remedy; and that is, as I said before, to *withhold their pennies*, and other contributions; or, at

any rate, not to give any, in any case, where the preacher does not distinctly avow his enmity to drunkenness, corruption, bribery, and perjury, and his friendship to a lawful and constitutional Reform of the Commons' House of Parliament.

The members of this Conference have a School at *King's Wood*, at which *their* sons (and not the sons of their congregations,) are *educated*! This is their *University*. This, too, is maintained at the expence of the congregations, who, for this purpose, are called on for *an annual subscription*! The sons, thus educated, sally out, in due time, to be *gentlemen*; that is to say, to have *places* of some sort or other, under the government.—To be Excisemen, Taxgatherers, Clerks and Officers of various sorts. For the fathers are the most busy and persevering set of men on earth. Is it possible for the good people who pay for the bringing up of these sons, to believe that it is God's pleasure that they should be taxed in order to feed and educate the children of their preachers: in order to make *gentlemen*: in order to add to the race of idlers, while their own children and wives have scarcely a sufficiency of the bare necessities of life? Saint Paul says, that he who neglects the care of his own kindred is *worse than a Heathen*; what must those be, then,

who, of their own accord, withhold a part of the bread from their own children, and give it to fatten a lazy crew who are to be brought up to be the masters of those children! Can it be pleasing to God: can it tend to the salvation of a man's soul to act in this way? Did Jesus Christ tell his Apostles to saddle the faithful with keeping their wives and children? Did the Apostles raise contributions upon their disciples, in order to deck out their wives in silks and satins, and to bring up their sons as gentlemen?

This is an enormous abuse. It is one of the things that a Reformed Parliament would set to rights in a twinkling. Here is a mass of property; Chapels, Parsonage houses, School houses, Land, Public Funds, which a body of men, wholly unknown to the law, have contrived to get within their grasp and to appropriate to their own exclusive benefit; while this same body of men throw the charge of educating their own children upon a part of the people of the country. When we consider all these things; when we consider what a stake the Conference has in the funds; and when we consider for what purposes their sons are educated, and see that in numerous cases, at least, they are destined to become clerks, excisemen, under commissaries, and the like;

the Methodist congregations need not be at all surprised at the attachment of the Conference to the present order of things. They need not be at all surprised at the *Bulls* which the Conference issues from time to time against the Reformers. They need not be at all surprised at the Methodist preacher at Manchester, who called upon his congregation to take up arms against the Reformers. A labourer's family is, in one way or other, taxed to the amount of as much as would breed up a child. Let me ask any Methodist whether he thinks that his paying at this rate is necessary to the salvation of his soul? Whether he thinks that he ought to follow men who act in precise contradiction to the precepts and the example of all the Apostles?

There are some few preachers amongst the Methodists who actually do preach *without pay*. But these men, though so well worthy of praise and of encouragement, are sure to be *kept down* by that haughty aristocracy, or rather, oligarchy of which the Conference consists. These pious and disinterested men, who are really followers of the Apostles, to the utmost of their power, are seldom permitted to preach to large congregations. The Dons of the Conference scowl upon them; treat them as a sort of interlopers;



send them off into little villages to preach to half dozens, or half scores; while they themselves preach to thousands. Now, it ought to be a point with the Methodists all over the kingdom to go to hear none but these disinterested men; and, if the Conference shut them out of the chapels, they ought to hear them at their own houses, to follow them into barns or under trees. There wants nothing but to consult reason and truth, and to follow what they shall prescribe. No man has the power to save the soul of another man. God, in giving his word to men, never could intend that they should have to purchase from man, the salvation which is freely tendered to them in that word. "Freely have you received, and *freely give.*" This is the precept of JESUS CHRIST. But the Conference hold a different sort of doctrine: for, whatever they may have received, it is pretty clear that they will give nothing without being well paid for it.

Now, my Lord, without entering into any inquiry, with regard to other religious sects, we may here see that there is, at this time, a "*peculiar duty*" demanded from the Bishops of the Church. The state of things above described points that duty out. If there be unbelievers in great numbers, who can wonder at it, while there is one sect who is chal-

lenging the Church to a comparison of populousness; and while there are, perhaps, fifty, altogether, each representing all the rest as being in error; each condemning all the rest, as being misleaders; each broadly insinuating that the doctrine and discipline of all the rest leads to perdition; while all of them call themselves Christians, and all of them appeal to the very same book, as an authority for their dogmas and their terrible denunciations? In such a state of things, the wonder is, not that there are so many unbelievers, but that there are so many who retain any belief at all. The fault, therefore, is in the Christians themselves, and not in those who no longer profess to be Christians; for, as POPE observes, in speaking of wrangling Divines: "They write about it, till e'en believers begin to doubt it."

What your Lordship and the rest of the Right Reverend Bench have "*undertaken*" to do, it would be presumption in me to say. But, I have never been an inattentive observer of the Clergy. A Correspondent once complained of me, that I appeared to have no religion but what was connected with politics. This is very much my case; and must it not be so in reason, where Church and State are so closely united, and where the ritual and the discipline

of the Church are built upon Acts of Parliament. If the King be the head of the Church, his subjects, of course, must feel that their religion is connected with politics. However, I see every thing with the eye of a Politician. I see, in a clergyman of the Church, not merely a preacher of the Gospel, but a participator in fact as well as in law, of the produce of the land, and of the rents of houses. I see, in him, a man having a great deal to do in parochial contributions; in the management of the poor; in the licensing of Public Houses, where his certificate is applied for. I see in him a person, capable of doing (from the very nature of his office) a great deal of good or a great deal of harm. In that part of the Church which is not merely parochial, I see the heads of seminaries of learning; and I see, moreover, the possessors of immense estates in Houses, Lands, and Manors. Take it altogether, the Church of England is a body beyond all comparison, more opulent and more powerful than any body of men (short of the rulers of some great Kingdom) that ever existed upon the face of the earth. It follows, of course, that if affairs, as to religion, be such as to require the interference of the secular arm, it must be the fault of this naturally powerful body. It has often

struck me, when, engaged in the sports of the field, I have sat upon my horse on some high hill, and, casting my eye around, saw the spires rising so thickly and so regularly over the country; it has often struck me with wonder, that there should be any such a being as a *dissenter* in this Kingdom! Especially when I considered the ample means which the Church possessed: her ample wealth and her ample powers. I have always come to a conclusion, that if I myself had been a Clergyman, my parishioners should never have straggled from me; being always firmly convinced that sober reason, urged with mildness, accompanied with talent, will always be an over-match for fanaticism, as I have proved it to be an over-match for falsehood and fury in political matters.

Your Lordship will see the point towards which I am approaching. The fault lies in the want of constant residence and a diligent discharge of the duties, and a diligent exercise of the powers, committed to the hands of the Clergy. They meddle too much with boisterous and angry politics. They become, in numerous instances, partizans. They cause, by these means, open divisions amongst the people; and they have, unhappily, adopted the belief



that Reform of Parliament means *Revolution*; and that Revolution means a Revolution like that of France, which, as is well known, stripped the Church of all its property including its tythes.

Even, if their opinion, in this respect were correct, they do not act a wise part under the present circumstances of the nation. They reason wrongly. There is no Reformer who contemplates Revolution in the usual acceptation of that word. I have as much to say in the matter as any man; and it is probable, that my words have as much influence with the people as the words of any man; and I, at all times, declare that to tear establishments to pieces, would, in my opinion, be as wicked an act as ever was contemplated by man.

Those persons are very much deceived who think that the mass of the people; or the *vulgar*, as some folks call them, have no regard for the security of property and for the preservation of those distinctions in Society without which a nation (which has been long accustomed to those distinctions) would run great risk of falling, first into confusion and then into feebleness: and, as to those persons who have been abused, most grossly calumniated, under the appellation of Radical Reformers,

pride in their country, love of its honour and renown, are not less dear to their hearts than the enjoyment of their own rights. One of their motives for seeking a Reform, is, that their Country may not sink down into that feeble and degraded thing, which, they are persuaded, nothing but a Reform will prevent it from becoming. And, my Lord, is it possible for any rational man not now to perceive that their persuasion is correct?

However, even supposing the alarm of the Clergy, as to the designs of the Reformers, to be correct; even in this case, the Clergy do not act a wise part. It is universally acknowledged, that *some great change must take place*. In this all men are agreed; and, therefore, the only thing to settle is, what sort of change that shall be. I have, at this moment, lying upon my table, thirteen letters, received within four days, from persons of considerable property, existing in various shapes, which letters request my advice as to what the owners of such property ought to do with it, *seeing the crisis that is approaching!* One of these letters contains a pound, as a FEE to me, for my opinion! Now, my Lord, you may believe me or not, as you please; but, I assure you, and the writers of

these letters, that I tremble with anxiety when I look at them. I have hitherto, during my life, had my feelings divided: I have cared about many things at a time: but now, my feelings are all for my country. I have had no hand in bringing her into this degraded state. I have, on the contrary, laboured most diligently and most disinterestedly, in order to prevent her being brought into this state. If my advice had been followed, she would now have been tranquil, free, prosperous and great. I have been abused, calumniated, persecuted and most cruelly punished in return for those endeavours and for that advice; but still I feel for my country and would sacrifice every comfort upon earth; I would willingly and joyfully make that sacrifice, if, by that sacrifice, I could cause her restoration. But, what hope can I have, while, instead of measures of remedy, such as would proceed from great and expanded minds, I see nothing proposed which is not almost a disgrace to Change Alley; while from the rural districts, we hear of propositions which would better become the cells of Bedlam. Instead of the language of conciliation towards the people; instead of words to soothe them in their un-

paralleled distress; we hear of nothing but defiance and menace; instead of something to call forth the exercise of their patience and to inspire them with hope; we hear of nothing but what must necessarily tend to irritate and urge them on to deeds of despair. The thirteen letters which I have spoken above, my Lord, are no more than a specimen of the thoughts, the fears, the alarms, of tender fathers and mothers; and, your Lordship will please to observe, that, in no one instance, is the writer of any of these letters known to me. They are but a mere specimen of what is now going on in the minds of men. Property will be removed from the country, in all directions. It is now actually going away, like the meltings of an immense mass of ice, which has been accumulating for ages, and which has, all at once been exposed to the sun. From every part of its base, there is a trickling current scarcely perceptible, indeed, but being constantly going, will, if a remedy be not speedily applied, reduce the mass to nothing.

The Clergy, therefore, ought to look forward to what will inevitably arrive, at no distant day. One projector has already broached a plan which would take away

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and transfer from the Church, for ever, a full third part of its property. No Reformer has ever yet broached a project of this sort; and yet this project has, by the enemies of Reform, and the pretended friends of the Establishments, been trumpeted forth as wise and necessary! This, one would think, ought to give much greater alarm to the Clergy than any thing which they can, without being absolutely mad, anticipate from a Reform of the Parliament. The thing, my Lord, is fast coming; it is now visibly coming to what I, many years ago, foretold it would come, namely, a taking away of the lands and giving them to the fund-holders, or a very great deduction from the interest of the fundholders. The fate of the Church depends much upon the temper of the nation. And the question which it seems to me the Clergy have to decide on, is this, whether, in the struggle which is approaching, they are to have the mass of the people on their side, or that mass against them. The temporalities of the Church consist of property which, as to its tenure, differs from other property in general. The tenure is contingent, and has often been brought under the controul and subject to the disposition of acts of Parliament.

The Clergy should remember this; and, indeed, the projectors who are now at work, appear to me to be very likely to make them remember it as long as they live.

The line of conduct to be pursued by the Clergy is this: an abstaining from gross intermeddling in politics; a gentleness and kindness towards their parishioners; an endeavour to conciliate upon all occasions, rather than to subdue by force; and especially to use every effort in their power to prevent acts of petty tyranny in all their neighbourhoods. It is surprising that they cannot see how much influence and how much real power they loose by becoming justices of the peace; and thereby becoming the inflictors of punishment, instead of being the Ministers of peace and good-will. Men, when they have seen them, active and vigorous in the former capacity, can, with difficulty bring themselves to listen to them with patience in the latter capacity. When they lay down the powers of the word, in order to take up those of the sword, they lay them down *for ever*!

Very wisely has it been settled in the United States of America, that no clergyman of any description shall be a Magistrate. They are sometimes chosen as Members

of the Legislatures; that is to say, as the propounders and makers of laws; but as to the execution of the laws; as to the bearing of the sword; it has been wisely deemed incompatible with their spiritual functions. In that country there exists no distinctions as to religion. All men live together without wrangling about religion and with very little, indeed, of controversy upon the subject. In New York, there is a Roman Catholic Church which has *fifteen thousand* Members belonging to it. They are almost all Irish, and I would to God that there were fifteen thousand men to be found in any one City of the King's Dominions so orderly, so free from vice, so happy and so contented! I had the honour to dine, a few days before I left New York, with one of the Priests and with the Bishop of this part of the Roman Catholic community in America; and two more amiable and more pious men, more considerate, more humane, and more excellent, in every respect, I never met with. It is nearly the same with regard to all the other religious sects. It now and then happens (as will always be the case) that a bad man belongs to the Ministry. But, at the very first trip, *out he goes*; and thus,

is religion never disgraced by the immorality of its teachers. Nothing can be more exemplary than the Ministers of the English Church in America. Their Bishops and Priests are what they really ought to be; and I always entertained for them the highest respect.

Nobody in that country expresses any fears about the increase of blasphemy. Ninety nine hundredths of the people do not know what the word means. They are all religious; and all pay respect to clergymen. They are a race of Republicans that pull off the hat to nobody, out of fear or submissiveness. A man worth a million of dollars, passes along the street as unheeded as a carman; but every body, even the lowest of the labourers, show respect to Clergymen. It is a saying, at New York, that if you have a fancy to have people pull their hats off to you, you must make yourself a parson. Lawyers and Doctors are, indeed, treated with a little more respect than a mere rich man; than a mere muckworm; but the clergyman, be he of what sect he may, is sure to be treated with attention and respect. These Clergymen, too, are all of them *well paid*. They receive upon an average, five times as



much as an English curate; and if I were to say ten times as much, I should be nearer the mark. America is, in short, by far the most religious country in the world; and this effect arises from the moral conduct of the teachers and from their carefully abstaining from intermeddling with politics.

The law freely tolerates all religions; even that of the Deist. It permits the Deist to swear in Courts of Justice by simply holding up his hand. This very rarely occurs; perhaps, not four times a year in the whole country; but when it does occur, it excites no prejudice against the man; his evidence is received with as much credit as if he swore upon the Evangelists; and he experiences no sort of persecution. As to the Legislatures (the Congress particularly) they literally follow the precepts of the Gospel in this respect. They *swear not at all*. So that, the President, or any Member of the Congress, may be a Jew, Deist, or even an Atheist. And it is very likely that some of them are really of the two last classes. Yet, they are a very enlightened body of men; very wise; very just in most of their proceedings; and perfectly faithful to their great and most im-

portant trust. What we ever shall see in the world, I do not know; but, up to this time, we have not seen, taking all their history into view, a body of men so wise, so prudent and so just as that Congress.

With this mass of experience before our eyes, how can we possibly believe, my Lord, that fire and faggot, or that penal statutes, can tend to the advancement of the cause of religion? Be the excuses for them, what they may, penal statutes upon matters of opinion will always be regarded as persecution; and, if nothing else can possibly alienate the people from the Christian faith, persecution will effect that purpose. I saw Mr. EATON stand in the pillory for publishing a little tract of Mr. PAINE which was called (falsely) his *Third Part* of the *Age of Reason*. The day before, in the same place, a man had been in the pillory for perjury, and had been pelted with rotten eggs, and almost strangled by blood and guts brought from the slaughter-houses, and flung in his face. Very different was the reception that Mr. EATON met with! An immense crowd of people cheered him during the whole hour: some held out biscuits, as if to present him with: others held him out

glasses of wine, and others little flags of triumph and bunches of flowers. While the executioner and officers of Justice were hooted! **THIS IT WAS, MY LORD, THAT WAS THE REAL CAUSE OF PUTTING AN END TO THE PUNISHMENT OF THE PILLORY!** Which was not put an end to from any of those motives which Mr. CANNING has recently ascribed to the makers of that law. The pillory was a suitable and a just mode of punishing; it was, also, a very ancient mode of punishing; it was a humane way of punishing; it was a moral way of punishing: it proceeded upon the principle that shame had great influence on the human breast and upon another principle, universally recognized as just, which is, that punishments are inflicted for the sake of *example*, and not for the sake of *vengeance*. The perjurer suffers in his body, from being shut up in a prison, but the knowledge of his punishment, and his future degradation is known to but very few persons; whereas, by exhibiting him in the pillory, he becomes nearly as notorious as is the hatred of his crime. Mr. CANNING's argument upon the occasion alluded to, was as flimsy as that witty gentleman's

arguments generally are. It was right, he said, not to expose gentlemen of literary attainments, to the chance of so odious a punishment. But, could the Parliament not have taken the punishment from libellers and have left it still for the correction and exposure of perjurers, swindlers and public speculators? And to take it from all at once, what was this but to put Gentlemen of literary attainments upon a level with the foulest of miscreants? So much for the justice and humanity of this measure of abolishing the pillory; which was much about upon a level with the report in favour of a *softening of the Penal Code*, which report is now before the House of Commons, and which report sets out by saying that the Reporters do not propose any softening at all with regard to offences "*of a political nature*"! Oh no! this softening is intended only for poor harmless thieves and such like! All the severities of the penal code may remain undisturbed, as far as relates to those who commit political offences! The pillory gave a sort of an *appeal to the People*. It was ancient; it was wise and it was just. It has been done away; but a Reformed Parliament will not sit one month before it be



It was restored; or, at least, this is my decided opinion.

Looking back to the scene which the exhibition of Mr. EATON produced: the multitude collected was perfectly promiscuous. High and low, rich and poor. Gentlemen, Merchants, Tradesmen of all sorts, artizans and labourers, and a pretty fair proportion of females. If they had all been taken up together and put down in an open field, it might have been truly said: there is a specimen of London. There was not a dissenting voice, and yet, my Lord, were all these people Deists? Perhaps, not one single soul of them. They were not ignorant of the cause of his being in the pillory; for he had taken care to station boys and men with bills in their hats, with these words printed on them. "*Mr. Eaton is put in the pillory for publishing Paine's Age of Reason.*" Not a Deist, I will be bound to say, was to be found in the crowd; and yet, they could not give their assent to a punishment inflicted for a *matter of opinion*.

This one instance would, with any other men, have decided the point; but to combat men as to matters of opinion, punishment is wholly unavailing. Opinion must be met by argument, if met at all; for to combat

it by vindictive measures is only to insure its triumph; and, my Lord, I am thoroughly convinced that the law to which your Lordship was pleased to give your assent, in so decided a manner, will, in the end, be injurious, instead of being beneficial to the cause of the christian religion generally and to the cause of the Church of England in particular. Juries, now that the terrible punishment of banishment may be inflicted on a man; now that he may be for ever driven from his country, his home, his friends, his family and all that he holds dear upon earth for having erred (admitting it to be error) as to a mere matter of opinion; juries, under such circumstances, must be unfeeling or careless in the extreme not to proceed with great reluctance and with uncommon circumspection, to a verdict of *guilty*; which may be attended with consequences infinitely more cruel than those of death itself.

From such a mode of combatting error, my mind would recoil with afright; nor can I believe that, when your Lordship has had time to reflect upon the matter, you will think it a mode very well becoming the support of a Christian Protestant Church. However, while I should not be justified in questioning the humanity of your Lordship, or in imputing to you any other motive for your conduct, upon this occasion, than that of advancing the interests of religion, I

have availed myself of the exercise of that small portion of literary liberty which has been left to us, in order candidly, and, I trust, not disrespectfully, to offer you my opinions upon the subject. I do not flatter myself that these opinions will have any very great weight; but, we have all of us duties to perform in Society, and, upon this occasion, I have endeavoured to perform mine.

I am, my Lord Bishop,  
Your most obedient,  
And most humble servant,  
WM. COBBETT.

TO

Mr. JAMES PAUL COBBETT,  
AT NEW YORK.

London, 26 January, 1820.

MY DEAR JAMES,

You will see, by referring to the last Register, that I gave notice that the birth-day of Mr. PAINE would be celebrated on its anniversary, the 29th instant, by a public dinner at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, in the Strand. I had no idea that meanness, jealousy, spite and fear would descend so low as to interfere, upon an occasion like this, to prevent

the landlord of the house from furnishing us with room and dinner. This, however, has been the case; and the man, after a good deal of quibbling and shifting, and divers silly pretences, has refused. The celebration, therefore, will not take place just at present.

When I arrived in England, Mr. CARLILE, who had published the *Age of Reason*, had just been prosecuted and condemned to suffer a most tremendous fine and imprisonment. The trial, the sentence, and all the circumstances together, had produced that sort of temporary panic to which JOHN BULL has always been very liable and of which the sober sided Yankees know nothing. To cry out against CARLILE, PAINE and "*blasphemy*," was the order of the day amongst all the enemies of freedom. Nor was Mrs. CARLILE omitted, who is a Hampshire lass, and was born, I believe, at Sasbury Green, within, as you know, three miles of Botley. What harm she could do to Christendom, it is not easy to discover; and as to Mr. CARLILE, he had long been a vender of religious tracts, so that, one would think, the former part of his



life might have formed something in the way of set off against the latter.

To bring in *the bones of PAINE* amidst such a state of things was to put public opinion, and especially with regard to myself, to the severest test. By way of preparation, the newspapers (about three hundred in number) had proclaimed me to be coming with a design to carry the bones at the head of a Revolutionary army. They had called me blasphemer and had prefixed to my name every appellation calculated to fill the minds of the people with hatred against me. All the hypocrites in the nation, all the bigots, all those who live by the taxes were open mouthed against me and my relicts. The Times and Courier newspapers, more especially, teemed with the most abominable calumnies, descending, at last, down to sheer execrations. No one dared to move a pen or tongue in my defence, and I found that all that was not decidedly against me, upon this point (except the labouring people) were silent.

Former friends, or pretended friends, shrugged up their shoulders; and looked hard in my face, as if in wonder that I was not dismayed. They seemed surprised to see me as cheerful and to hear me laugh, as much as ever. Three Gentlemen at Liverpool were an honourable exception.

I know JOHN BULL as well as most people, and I know that his panics are not of long duration. Nothing ever was, or ever will be, more than a nine days wonder, in England, in spite of every art that can be made use of to keep it alive. You have, before, had an account of my reception at Liverpool; and that good little man, Captain COBB will have told you, before now, all the particulars. The proclamation of the Manchester Magistrates to prevent me from receiving in person the congratulations of the people in that populous district, said a great deal more for me than the people themselves could have said. The very pleasing reception at Coventry and that in London, though they did not

at all surprize me, convinced me that my calculations as to the duration of the panic were correct. The dreadful bills which followed close upon the heels of those transactions have alarmed our enemies much more than they have the Reformers. And the punishing of *blasphemy* with *banishment* has given a shock to the feelings and opinions of the middling class such as they, perhaps, never received before. During the discussions in Parliament, a great deal was said upon this subject; and my Lord GROSVENOR took occasion to speak of the famous bones in terms of great contempt, and to infer, as a proof of the religiousness of the People, that they despised this act of bringing home the bones of PAINE.

His Lordship is not so well acquainted with the opinions of the nation as I am. He is correct as to the religious feelings of the country; but he ought to have known that it is the politics and the political economy of PAINE that I admire, and, on account of which, I think that his remains ought to be honoured. The nation

thinks with me, upon this subject. I know it does. But I was resolved to put this matter to the test, by inviting to a public dinner, at their own expence, those persons in London, who chose to celebrate the Anniversary of Mr. PAINE's birth. And, upon this occasion, I thought it right to take the whole responsibility upon myself; to put myself in the chair; to propose resolutions declaring PITT and Fox unworthy of being remembered by annual celebrations, and declaring PAINE to be worthy of that honour. This, you will say, was taking JOHN BULL by his horns. But I was sure of my mark, and there would have been such a company as this Crown and Anchor never yet saw and never will see. Not only the great room, which will contain a thousand persons; but all the other rooms would have been full. The company would not have cared a straw about the *eating*, and the House would have been unable to contain a quarter part of the persons that would freely have given their money merely to be present, without so much as a drink of water to regale them.

Envy, hatred, malice, revenge, fear; but above all, Envy, mean,



black, dastardly Envy interfered to prevent the triumph of reason and of truth, and the Landlord refused us his house. Now, mind, the thing was too low, too base to be imputed to the Ministers or to any body under them. This is a thing beneath them. Such extremely low, extremely despicable acts, they do not deal in. These acts are reserved for the envious crew, whom I first found in a sort of spawn-like state; who were warmed into life and puffed up into importance by myself, and who, as a punishment for their ingratitude, I have, by my silence, pent up in an auger hole, as Caliban was by Prospero. I will not take off the punishment by naming them even now; for, as was the maxim with the mean wretches spoken of by POPE, "better be damned than not be named at all."

The consequence will, in the end, be, that either this Crown and Anchor, or some other great house in London, will be rented, or bought, by persons friendly to the Cause of Re-

form; and I shall, I dare say, soon be able to tell you, that an association is formed for this purpose. You will observe, that, as the law now stands, nobody dares take money for admission into any place where politics are talked. So that, we are compelled to have a dinner, or else we should be laid by the heels, and, for any thing that I know, transported. You will say that the paper tent upon Long Island is better than this. No, no, my boy, for though the paper tent was very pleasant to eat, drink and sleep in, there were no victories gained there; no mean wretches exposed; no services rendered to our suffering countrymen. I have not been in the least disappointed. I have found the country in precisely the state that I expected to find it in. My mind would have been continually here if my body had remained there. I have found every thing as I expected to find it; except, that the measures against the press are a little short of what I expected; and yet, a considerable deal of ingenuity has been employed.

I intend, in the course of the winter, to have Mr. PAINE's hair put into gold rings. Those which I have promised to send to New York, shall be sent, and the rest I shall sell to those who chuse to buy them at a guinea a piece beyond the cost of the gold and the workmanship. These guineas shall be employed, with whatever else shall be raised, by PAINE *himself*, in the erection of a monument to his memory, either at Thetford, his native town, or at Botley: and if it please God to give us life, we will have a funeral worthy of the remains that are to be buried. I do not say when this shall take place: but it shall be, if I live, in a season when twenty waggon loads of flowers can be brought to strew the road before the hearse. You will observe that this is contingent, however; for that, we may be *banished* before we can bring any thing to maturity; in such case, I shall have done all that I have had in my power; and no man can do more. It is my intention when the rings are made, to have the workman with me,

to give him out the hair, and to see it put in myself, then to write in my own hand, a certificate, on parchment and to deliver it with each ring. This will be another pretty good test whether the remains of this great man be despised or not. There are some people here that seem to envy him though he is dead. I wish with all my soul they could change places with him: he never knew what envy was, and if he had known, he never would have envied *them*.

I believe that every one of the apple grafts which we sent hither last year, are growing in some part or other of the kingdom. Those that went to the Horticultural Society have all taken well, and we have some at Botley a yard long, and as thick as my thumb. This is great encouragement for you to send us more. Let us have fifty sorts; and pack them up just as I packed them up last year. You will have sent you, in a few days, cuttings of all sorts. I mention these things, here, lest your brother's letters relating to



them should, by any accident, not reach you. God bless you.

WM. COBBETT.

P.S. Don't grow serious. I have seldom known a serious looking fellow worth a farthing. Let drunkards be serious: we who keep sober have leisure to laugh.

Pray read the speech of the Duke of Sussex which I send you in the Morning Chronicle, delivered at the Norfolk dinner in celebration of Mr. Fox's birth-day. So much sense was never spoken by any man now in either House of Parliament.

#### COBBETT'S FUND FOR REFORM.

This work proceeds as it ought to do. I recommend to *societies* whether of trades or otherwise, to combine their operations. The difficulty is to find places of safe deposit. But this may be easily got over. Let it be recollected that it is the *great number* of *small sums*, from which large sums most frequently arise. There will be

a box for depositing any sums at the office of COBBETT'S EVENING POST, No. 269, in the Strand. There will be also a book in which such contributors as choose it, may enter their names. This office is now open for the receiving of ADVERTISEMENTS, ORDERS, and for every thing else relating to

#### COBBETT'S EVENING POST,

the publication of the first number of which was unavoidably put off to SATURDAY, THE 29TH OF JANUARY. To this office I wish all letters, for myself, to be addressed. The postage must be paid, a regulation which I am sorry to adopt, but which has been rendered absolutely necessary by the hostility which the sons and daughters of corruption are carrying on against me, through the means of *sham letters*. This is labouring in their vocation; for they know well that what they make me pay in postage, goes towards augmenting the *taxes*, and their food consists of taxes! —N. B.—To all those gentlemen who have forwarded money towards the *Fund for Reform*, who have also put

*their names* to their letters, and whose letters I *have received*, I have written answers, in my own hand, and under my own name. And this I shall continue to do; observing only, that I shall set apart a portion of only one day in the week for answering such letters; so that, gentlemen will be so good as not to deem me negligent, if their letters should not be answered quite so quickly as they might reasonably expect.

There will be no 6d. Register next week. But, it is not yet finally determined on, whether to publish the Register *Monthly* or *Weekly*. This will be notified in due time. A table of Contents for *this* Volume, shall be tacked to the next Number of the Register, to be taken off and applied to this Volume.

END OF VOLUME THIRTY-FIVE.

Entered at Stationers' Hall.

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